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CIRCULAR LETTER: DHCQ 01-08-415

TO: Administrators, Out of Hospital Dialysis Units

FROM: Paul Dreyer, PhD, Director

DATE: August 24, 2001

SUBJECT: Direct Care Staffing Requirements

The purpose of this letter is to remind to all Out of Hospital Dialysis Unit Administrators of the requirements for a 3:1 direct care staffing ratio. We have received a number of inquiries regarding the proper interpretation of the requirement.

The applicable regulations are as follows:

145.150 Nursing Personnel

The unit shall have on duty sufficient direct care nursing personnel to ensure that all patients undergoing dialysis have nursing care, provided by registered nurses and other staff trained in chronic dialysis, available all times at a ratio of at least one direct care staff member to every three patients. If dialysis is performed in more than one room of the unit, at least one nursing staff member shall be present at all times in each room in which a patient is undergoing dialysis.

145.020 Definitions: Direct Care Staff

Direct Care Staff means registered nurses, licensed practical nurses, and trained dialysis technicians who provide direct care to patients undergoing dialysis in the unit. Direct care staff may include charge nurses, but shall not include the director of nurses, nurses assigned to dialysis training, or technicians assigned to dialyzer preparation or reuse, equipment maintenance, and water testing and purification.

145.020 Definitions: Direct Care

Direct care means initiating and discontinuing dialysis, monitoring patients during treatment, and administering medications.

To be in compliance with these regulations, one direct care worker cannot be assigned to more than three patients at one time.

We hope this clarifies the many inquiries on this staffing ratio. Further, we expect that staff will have access to the regulations and this clarification, should they have any questions about staffing requirements.

As you know, facilities are required to comply with all applicable licensing regulations at all times. If you have any questions or concerns, please call Kathleen Coyle, Assistant Director, at 617-753-8106.